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ABSTRACT

A number of issues concerning the evaluation of moral and civic education programs are discussed. Four program types are described: (1) rationalist, which involves a high cognitive knowledge of the law and legal processes; (2) actionist, in which students participate in out-of-class projects; (3) values clarification, in which students study, select, and act upon their values; and (4) moral development, which is based upon Kohlberg's stages. Six high school programs are briefly described with respect to the school demography, curriculum approach, tests used, and student activities. Implications and conclusions, based on these case studies, are discussed. First, it is difficult to list specific goals and objectives for this type of educational program. Second, these programs have not clarified the situations in which moral consideration is imperative versus those in which a person may act before considering all the ethical aspects of the situation. Third, differences in goals between different programs, and varying sources of program goals also complicate evaluation. Fourth, there is a serious lack of suitable testing instruments for this type of program. It is concluded that observation and multiple evaluation techniques would be appropriate for evaluating moral education. (GDC)

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PROBLEMS OF EVALUATION IN SELECTED MORAL AND CIVIC EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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As part of an exploration of the problems peculiar to evaluation in the field of moral and civic education, we have recently conducted case studies of six secondary-school instructional programs where the program designers made a claim of trying to influence the moral outlooks of students. Our intent was to learn if improvements might be made in our capacity to produce somewhat more systematic statements than is currently possible about the impact of such programs on students, teachers, and schools. We have focused on the distinctive aspects of assessment in this field, in order to determine whether a knowledge transfer could be made from evaluation methodologies generally to the specific features of moral education programs. The first section of the paper will briefly describe the programs we studied and the second will examine some of the implications which have emerged from our work thus far, focusing particularly on problems related to goals and measurements.

Typology of programs

Following Superka (1976), with some modifications, we classified moral-education programs into four types, differentiated by both their goals and their means. We assumed from the outset--and this was amply confirmed by the case studies--that actual programs would have elements of more than one

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type but that each one could nevertheless be characterized as being predominantly of one type or another, and the classification could thus be used to assure ourselves of some diversity in the programs chosen for study. The types were:

1. Rationalist programs, aimed primarily at bringing students' reasoning processes, on issues having moral content, into closer conformity with canons of logical and especially of legal thought. They rely, more heavily than the other approaches, upon written materials and didactic instruction. In addition to a concern with cognitive knowledge of the law, these programs often include among their goals an increase in political participation and in respect for legal institutions and a decrease in law-violating acts.

2. Actionist programs, which make relatively little use of written materials and formal instruction. Instead, arrangements are made for students to spend a substantial amount of time outside the classroom engaged in some adult-like activity, the assumption being that students will learn more from their own participation in something "meaningful" than from conventional classroom lessons. Students are sometimes encouraged to reflect on their experiences, orally or in writing, to enhance the morally relevant effects.

3. Values-clarification programs, which are distinguished by a set of specific pedagogical techniques--the "clarifying question," the "value continuum," and others. These techniques are to be applied to the everyday experiences of the students, in order to heighten "relevance," the purpose being to help students become aware of the range of value choices, choose

among them more thoughtfully, and suit their actions more deliberately and consistently to their chosen values.

4. Developmental programs, associated with the stage theory of Lawrence Kohlberg. The principal vehicle by which students' movement through the stages of moral development is to be accelerated is the discussion of hypothetical moral dilemmas. Developmental programs tend to emphasize thought and expression rather than action. However, in the belief that movement through the stages is impeded by the organization of the school itself, some of those using the developmental approach have added an "action" element in the form of a self-governing "community" within the school.

Case studies

Following four pilot studies, one of each type of program, we undertook case studies in two high schools with rationalist programs and two with actionist programs, and one each with a program of the values-clarification and developmental types.

One of the rationalist programs was in Waller High School, in Chicago's Northside. Waller's enrollment is less than 1,000 students, most of them from low-income families and about two-thirds of them Black and 30 percent Hispanic. The program we studied was centered in a course called Law in American Society, an elective open to students in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades. Three sections of the course used the materials and teaching strategies designed by the Constitutional Rights Foundation (CRF); three other sections did not. Enrollments were about 35 in each of the sections at the beginning of the year, but declined to less than 20 by the end, because of a high dropout rate in the school at large. Cognitive growth

was measured by teacher-made tests and by the Basic Law Knowledge Test, which had been developed by CRF. The Bass Orientation Inventory had been used as a measure of attitudinal changes, but it was subsequently withdrawn on the ground that the validating research had never been completed. There was no longer any systematic effort to determine the affective consequences of the course.

The other rationalist program we studied was in Highland High School in Salt Lake City. Highland is located in an upper-middle-class neighborhood; it enrolls 1,300 students, almost all of them white. Together with all other schools in the district, it was participating in an Ethics Education Program, under which each teacher was required to develop at least one learning unit each year based on one of the 12 principles that the district superintendent had identified as being the foundations of democracy. The superintendent's office conducted workshops at which teachers were instructed in ways of incorporating the principles into their classroom instruction. At the end of the year, all teachers were supposed to submit a report describing how they had met the district requirement. A faculty member and a graduate student at Utah State University had been contracted to develop a paper-and-pencil instrument using hypothetical situations and multiple-choice responses, with which to measure the program's moral and related effects. The instrument was to be ready for use by the 1980-81 school year, and at that time, a designated minimum score was to become a prerequisite for award of the high-school diploma.

One of the actionist programs was in Southwest High School in Minneapolis. Southwest has 1,500 students and serves a stable, middle-class, predominantly white population. The program we studied there operated

primarily by finding placements for students in work environments related to some course they were taking. One hundred to 150 students in grades ten through twelve particiapted each year, spending from a few weeks to an entire trimester at each placement. The program had a prominent moral-education component when it began, and the Defining Issues Tests was used in evaluation. Later, however, the DIT was dropped on the ground that the items were out of date and "artificial." Locally designed questionnaires were substituted, but then, with a change in funding sources, the program tended more toward career orientation and away from moral concerns. There was a residual of these concerns in a course called Consumer Power. In this course, limited to an enrollment of 20, students investigated problems of behavior in the marketplace and were encouraged to bring to the classroom for discussion moral dilemmas that they encountered. No systematic attempt at evaluation had been made.

The other actionist program was in Mitchell High School, Colorado Springs. Mitchell has about 2,000 students, of whom 5 percent are Black and 10 percent Chicano. Its actionist program, open only to seniors, differed from all the others we studied in that the students who were enrolled in it devoted all their time to it for one semester. During that time, the 60 or so participating students took four successive "blocks," each organized around a special theme and typically involving much activity outside the school. Each student also devoted a half-day a week to some "service" activity. The semester culminated in a 10-day "learning project" which each student designed for him/herself. The intended morally relevant outcomes were greater willingness to accept responsibility, greater sensitivity in relations with other people, and improved self-concept. These

outcomes were measured chiefly by teacher ratings. Some evaluation efforts were made by the central administration during the program's first two years, using such unobtrusive measures as attendance and course completion rates and frequency with which students fulfilled their individual learning contracts.

Our values-clarification site was Ossining High School in Ossining, New York, a school with a student body of 1,560 students, 15 percent of them Black, 5 percent Hispanic, and the rest Anglo-white but of considerable ethnic and socioeconomic diversity. There was no formally identified prograr of values clarification, but the principal was an ardent supporter of this approach and encouraged his teachers to use it wherever they saw fit. It appeared that about half the teachers--and half of the six-person guidance staff as well--were making some use of the techniques. Three or four courses used them quite extensively. As a further stimulus to the examination of values, the principal had established an environment which gave students much freedom in course selection and in the use of their time. Evaluation relied mostly on questionnaires to both teachers and students asking for their opinions about the effectiveness of the values-clarification techniques. In one course, and in a "comparison" course not using values clarification, a morally laden hypothetical situation was presented and students were asked a series of questions about it with multiple-choice answers.

The developmental program we studied was in Bakersfield, California, a community of more than 40,000 people in the midst of an agricultural area. Bakersfield High School has an enrollment of 2,700 students--56 percent Anglo-white, 21 percent Black, 20 percent Chicano, and 3 percent Oriental and Native American. About 115 juniors and seniors were participating in a program that used a modified from of the materials developed in the Civic

Education Project of Edwin Fenton at Carnegie-Mellon University. For these students, the program embraced their work in English and social studies, and for some it included physical education as well. All of the students, and the four teachers involved, joined in "community" meetings. In addition to standardized tests of skills and knowledge, measures of self-concept were administered; students were given selected exercises from the citizenship "test" of the National Assessment of Educational Progress; one-third of the students each year were given a Moral Judgment Interview; and each student was asked to write a subjective evaluation at the end of the year.

Emerging Implications

Statements of goals and objectives are especially problematic in moral and civic education programs. The effort to formulate such statements places program designers or managers between Scylla and Charybdis. Moral principles are inherently broad and general, and so statements incorporating them easily turn into meaningless platitudes. Efforts to be more specific and concrete, on the other hand, readily lead to trivialization--to objectives that are no longer recognizable as moral principles. The programs we studied varied considerably in this respect, from rather general statements in the values-clarification program at Ossining High School to quite specific intentions in the rationalist program at Waller. The formally stated goal of the latter, for example, was to bring about a statistically significant difference between the scores of experimental and control classes on the Basic Law Knowledge Test.

Effective evaluation does depend upon a clear statement of precisely what a program is attempting to accomplish. In the handbook that is to be produced in our project, we hope to offer some guidelines for program directors in addressing this dilemma. One possible approach is to state goals and

objectives in a hierarchical fashion, deriving successively more specific objectives and operational definitions from the more general statements. This procedure allows others to see the connection between objectives at the "lowest" and "highest" levels and also allows them to review and, if they wish, to replicate or modify the derivations.

A related problem, and one that seems to have been given no attention in the programs we studied and little or none in the moral-education literature, is that of the proper "boundaries" of moral concerns. What are the judgments, decisions, or behaviors in which moral considerations are imperative? Existing programs apparently assume that all decisions are to be made on moral grounds. In one sense, that is a proper assumption, for part of the very definition of "moral considerations" is that they are overriding. Yet probably most people would agree that it is unreasonable to expect anyone to refrain from action altogether until the moral implications have been thought through. That would be a paralyzing stance to take, and a person who took it would likely be regarded as behaving pathologically. Surely there are situations in which considerations of economy, convenience, time, or just plain enjoyment can, quite "morally," be given priority over moral considerations. But what are those situations? Or rather: By what criteria can we distinguish the decisions or actions that should be postponed until their moral aspects have been pondered, from those that may be taken now, with little or no concern for morally relevant consequences? Answers to these questions are prerequisite to evaluation designs, since they determine the situations in which the effects of moral education can and cannot, or should and should not, be expected to show up.

Another related problem has to do with a difference in the nature of program goals. Some, like the actionist types, tend to put their emphasis on certain substantive moral conclusions, decisions, or outcomes. Others, especially developmental and values-clarification, focus on the process by which moral conclusions or decisions are reached. The literature is replete with discussions of this distinction from philosophical and pedagogical perspectives. Where a program places its primary emphasis has direct implications for an evaluation design. The programs that we studied generally have a--sometimes implicit--blend of the two goals, but failing to keep them analytically separate can only complicate the task of evaluation.

A third goal-related issue--not unique to moral-education programs--is the source of the program goals to be evaluated. One position, argued by Suchman (1967), Riecken and Boruch (1974), and others, is that the goals stated by the program designers or managers should be the primary objects of concern. On the other hand, Scriven (1974) has argued that evaluation should be "goal-free," in the sense that the evaluator should document all types of program impact, regardless of whether they have been designated as part of the program and even ignoring the explicitly stated goals. In our view, evaluators are obligated to include the specified goals of the program in the scope of their activities but should explore other possible consequences as well.

Problems of measurement and instrumentation are among the most serious that confront assessment efforts in programs of moral education. In our fieldwork and in our review of the literature so far, we have not discovered (nor do we expect to) any general-purpose, paper-and-pencil instrument that is sufficient for evaluating these programs. Some of the program managers

we spoke to expressed a great deal of interest in and optimism about the potential utility of unobtrusive or non-reactive measures, as being particularly appropriate to moral-education programs. We have found this optimism to be at least premature. The morality of behavior is affected by many forces that are beyond the control of the manager or evaluator of a moral-education program, so that it is virtually impossible to attribute changes in the "degree" of morality to the program.

One technique that was not being tried in any of the programs we studied but that seems worth experimenting with is the use of a "disinterested observer." This would be a person--a teacher colleague or a parent or other community resident--who would be given a brief orientation to the goals and methods of the program and would then be asked to visit classes periodically and provide informal feedback to the teacher. The observer might attend to actual student behavior or make inferences about the presumed effects of the teacher's behavior--e.g., whether it was consistent with the goals of the program. This would admittedly be a highly subjective form of feedback, but it seems likely that a good observer, with no special ax to grind, might be able at least to sensitize a teacher to classroom processes that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Given the limitations of all available measurement procedures, the best strategy for evaluating moral-education programs would probably be the use of multiple methods. This strategy is frequently referred to as "triangulation." If different methods yield congruent results, the evaluator and the evaluator's audience would be entitled to greater faith in the validity of those results than if only a single, fallible method were used. If the different methods yield different results, then the reasons for those

differences would have to be sought. They may, for example, reflect different aspects of the program.

Triangulation will be the leitmotif of the handbook that will be the principal product of our project. We intend to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of a variety of methods, including paper-and-pencil tests, interviews, questionnaires, content analyses of journals, and unobtrusive measures; and we will suggest ways in which these might be combined. The primary audience for the handbook will be the teachers, administrators, and policy makers who are currently operating or considering the installation of programs of moral and civic education, and we hope that the result will be to give them greater confidence in their ability to deal with the issues of evaluation that arise in such programs.

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